



The Faculty of Music — University of Toronto

# ORFORD STRING QUARTET

Quartet in Residence.

ANDREW DAWES, *violin*

TERENCE HELMER, *viola*

KENNETH PERKINS, *violin*

MARCEL ST-CYR, *cello*

WALTER HALL  
EDWARD JOHNSON BUILDING

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1975  
3 P.M.

String Quartet in F major (3rd of Prussian Quartets) K.590      Mozart  
Allegro moderato  
Andante (allegretto)  
Minuetto and Trio  
Allegro

The Prussian Quartets K.575, K.589, and K. 590 were Mozart's last works in this genre. Commissioned in 1789 by King Frederick William II of Prussia, these quartets feature many prominent solo passages for the cello, the king's favorite instrument.

A decided lack of thematic interest in the first movement of K.590 is compensated for by virtuoso passages given to the cello and also to the viola.

The second movement is a set of figurative and decorative variations on a restrained and balanced theme, the symmetrical rhythm of which is paralleled in part of Act 2 of The Marriage of Figaro.

In the Minuetto, a delicate seven bar opening in the two violins is answered by another seven bars in all strings with violent dotted rhythm punctuations in the viola. The second part of the Minuet features suddenly gloomy chromatic harmonies as well as unexpected accents on second beats of the bar. The Trio presents a contrasting mood by a reliance on staccato playing and grace notes.

The last movement Allegro, in sonata-rondo form, is the highlight of the quartet. A playful opening theme in the first violin is taken over by the viola, after which fragments of the opening are bandied about imitatively; sudden hesitations and pauses remind us of Haydn. A surprise chord on D flat at the beginning of the development episode is a stroke of pure Mozartean genius. This is followed by a bold sequence of keys, and passages of sixteenth notes in close imitation. Towards the end, fragments of the theme are played against their own inversion. The kinetic energy of this movement provides a suitable conclusion to the more static previous movements of this, Mozart's last string quartet.

String Quartet in D minor (1890)      Luigi von Kunits  
Allegro ma non troppo  
Adagio  
Scherzo vivace  
Finale Allegro giocoso

The composer of this little known work was born in Vienna in 1870 and died in Toronto in 1931.

Before moving to America in 1893, he studied composition with Bruckner



and Jacksch, music history with Hanslick, and violin with Sevcik at the Vienna Conservatory. In America von Kunits taught violin and composition, and was concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony (1896-1910). He returned to his native Vienna for two years but in 1912, he was given a choice of two positions; the first, to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra for a year, and the second, to become head violin teacher at the newly formed Academy of Music in Toronto. His acceptance of the latter was partly influenced by his having previously heard the Mendelssohn Choir under the direction of its founder Dr. Vogt. He felt that Toronto, having accomplished this much, would have a brilliant musical future.

Von Kunits played an important part in Toronto's musical achievements, for, not only did he teach and compose, but he also founded the Academy String Quartet, the Canadian Journal of Music (1915-1919), and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra which made its debut in Massey Hall in October 1922.

The String Quartet was composed when von Kunits was a student in Vienna. A year later he completed two Violin concertos. His Canadian output includes a violin sonata, a suite for four strings, many works for violin and piano, songs, and choruses.

#### Intermission

String Quartet opus 51 no. 2 in A minor

Brahms

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante moderato

Quasi-Minuetto, moderato, Allegretto vivace

Finale: Allegro non assai

Though the composition of chamber music occupied Brahms during his entire life, only three string quartets remain in existence, opus 51 nos. 1 and 2, and opus 67. Brahms' destroyed a number of earlier quartets prior to the composition of opus 51 (1873) because he was dissatisfied with them.

Opus 51 no.2, though primarily lyrical, contains many examples of contrapuntal ingenuity. In the first movement, the opening four notes of the main theme are inverted at the end of the development, and are also played backwards at the end of the recapitulation. At the same time, this motive is treated canonically at strategic structural points of the movement. The wide ranging arpeggiated opening subject is contrasted by a lilting expressive second theme in thirds and sixths (*grazioso ed animato*).

The second movement in ternary form begins with a song-like melody in the first violin, accompanied by an expressive obbligato in viola and cello. The contrasting middle section, in the relative minor key, is turbulent and dramatic, with tremolos in the second violin and viola accompanying the outer strings in canon.

In the third movement, the graceful minuet with its drone accompaniment in the cello, is interrupted by an allegretto vivace in duple meter with light staccato sixteenth notes: references to the minuet theme are heard in eighth notes. The tempo di minuetto returns with a new melody in first violin in imitation with the viola, accompanied by canonic fragments of the minuet melody in the other two instruments.

The Finale, a masterpiece of cross rhythms, is the most orchestral sounding of all the movements. The loud opening theme accompanied by forte staccato chords, is contrasted by a lyrical theme in the first violin, with graceful eighth note figures alternating between viola and second violin. As in the previous movements, ingenious though unostentatious contrapuntal passages are heard. The quartet ends with a short but brilliant coda (*Piu vivace*). Notes by Mary O'Keefe.

Next Event: Thursday, March 20th at 8:30 p.m.  
Composers String Quartet performing  
all three of Elliott Carter's  
String Quartets.